



National Park of American Samoa (NPSA)

Natural History and Resources: NPSA was established in 1988 and was officially sanctioned in 1993 by the signing of a 50-year lease agreement between the National Park Service and the American Samoa Government (ASG). In 2002, the US Congress approved a 30% expansion on the Manu'a islands and the lease agreement is in the process of being finalized with ASG. NPSA, the only National Park south of the equator, is comprised of three geographically distinct units located on the islands of Tutuila, Ofu, and Ta'ū. While each island possesses similar characteristics of paleotropical rainforest and Indo-Pacific coral reefs, they are each unique.

Tutuila, the largest and most populated island in American Samoa, is the location of NPSA Headquarters. This unit consists of approximately 2,500 acres of land and 1,200 acres of coastal water. Ta'ū is the only park unit where cloud forests occur with approximately 350 inches of annual rainfall. The tallest peak in American Samoa (Lata Mountain at 3,170 feet) and a pristine stream (Laufuti) are located here. The smallest unit, Ofu, encompasses coral beaches and a protected fringing reef.

Significant resources include pollinators (flying foxes), rare species (sheath-tailed bat, Pacific boa, spotless crake, many-colored fruit dove), coral reef community (890 coral reef fish species and over 200 species of coral), sandy and rocky beaches, rain and cloud forests, and a variety of flowering plants. Threatened and endangered species include the humpback and sperm whales, and the green and hawksbill sea turtles.

Cultural History: The Samoan culture (Fa'asamoa, translated "the Samoan Way") stems from a traditional lifestyle which places heavy emphasis on familial ties. An ancient tradition still being carried out involves the giving of fine mats (woven mat of pandanus leaves) as a gift during funerals, weddings, and the bestowment of village chief titles. NPSA recognizes the importance of the Samoan culture, and is documenting the history, myths, and legends of all eight villages affiliated with the park.

Interesting archeological sites within NPSA include: fale foundations, masi pits (method used to ferment breadfruit or bananas), star mounds (rock foundations approximately 7 feet high used to catch pigeons for competition), grinding stones, adze quarries, and the Saua site (a sacred site on Ta'ū).

Inventory and Monitoring Highlights:

Numerous plant inventories have been conducted resulting in a list of 470+ native flora species. Also, an inventory of the seabird population was conducted in 2002 to establish a baseline of the American Samoa seabird population. On-going inventory and monitoring of Samoan fruit bats is conducted on Tutuila. The bat data are used to track population trends as past tropical cyclones have significantly affected the bat population.

Inventory and monitoring projects of the coral reef community have also occurred. Recent projects include monitoring harvests of fish and invertebrates, and quantitative inventories of fish, corals, and selected macro-invertebrates. Future plans are to continue to inventory and monitor the coral reef community.

Current Issues in Management: One management focus is the removal of the invasive *Falcattaria moluccana* (peacocksplume or

tamaligi palagi). This large tree shades native vegetation, consequently destroying the forest. As of December 2005, 50% of this species was removed from the park. Plans are to remove the remaining trees by the end of 2006. Conversely, reforestation of the Tutuila park unit was started in 2001. Four acres of abandoned Samoan plantations have been replanted with 40 different native species. The purpose of this project is to both restore native plants to provide food and habitat for wildlife, and to demonstrate the need to preserve the forest to the public. The reforestation project will expand in 2006 by out planting 1,500 more plants.

Climate change which causes coral bleaching and disease due to warmer sea temperatures is also an imminent issue, as is overfishing. Fishing is primarily subsistence; however, a recent study suggests that 9% of the local catch of reef fishes were illegally taken from park waters.

—Risé Hart

Come visit us:

NPSA is located approximately 2,300 miles southwest of Hawaii. There are currently two-scheduled air flights weekly from Honolulu, Hawaii to Pago Pago International Airport. Air and boat transportation is available from Tutuila to Ofu and Ta'ū at irregular intervals. The NPSA staff recommends scheduling at least a two-week trip.

On the Web at: <http://www.nps.gov/npsa/>



From left to right (top to bottom): Coconut crab, Samoan fruit bat, Fala, Guineafowl puffer fish, leie flower

NPSA photos